

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 AID-20 OMB-01 DPW-01 DRC-01 /126 W

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P R 251127Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3014

INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMCONSUL DANANG

USDEL JEC PARIS

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 3887

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ECON, VS

SUBJECT: GVN ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION INTO THE
"MARTEL CONVOY" AFFAIR

BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL

1. THE GVN HELD A NEWS CONFERENCE MARCH 25 CHAIRED BY ASST TO
THE DEFENSE MINISTER TON THAT CHUOC TO ANNOUNCE THE RESULTS OF AN
OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION INTO A RECENT SMUGGLING CASE THAT HAS BE-
COME KNOWN AS THE "MARTEL CONVOY" AFFAIR. THIS CASE AROSE THE
NIGHT OF JAN 31-FEB 1 WHEN A CONVOY OF SIX ARVN TRUCKS WAS STOPPED
ON NATIONAL HIGHWAY 4 IN LONG AN PROVINCE WHILE HEADING FOR SAIGON
JUST BEFORE CURFEW. STORIES DIFFER AS TO WHETHER THE ORDER TO
STOP THE CONVOY CAME FROM THE LONG AN PROVINCE CHIEF OR FROM
LT. GENERAL PHAM QUOC THUAN, COMMANDER OF MR-3. IN EITHER CASE
THE MOTIVE FOR THE ORDER SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A FEAR THAT THE CONVOY
CONTAINED COMMUNIST TROOPS DISGUISED AS ARVN HEADING TOWARD THE
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CAPITAL. A SEARCH OF THE SIX TRUCKS REVEALED THAT THEY WERE LOADED

WITH COGNAC AND CIGARETTES. INSTEAD OF HALTING A COMMUNIST ATTACK, THE AUTHORITIES HAD UNCOVERED A SMUGGLING RING. THE EPISODE QUICKLY BECAME KNOWN IN SAIGON AS THE "MARTEL CONVOY". RUMORS CIRCULATED WIDELY

THAT HIGH LEVEL PERSONALITIES WERE INVOLVED, INCLUDING EVEN THE WIVES OF PRESIDENT THIEU AND/OR PRIME MINISTER KHIEM. END CONFIDENTIAL

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED:

2. AFTER ONE AND ONE-HALF MONTHS OF WORK, THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER GAVE ITS DETAILED REPORT IN THE MARCH 25 PRESS CONFERENCE. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION FROM A LOCAL NEWSMAN, THE INVESTIGATORS SAID THAT NO HIGH LEVEL PERSONALITIES IN THE GOVT WERE FOUND TO BE INVOLVED. THE HIGHEST RANKING MILITARY FIGURES IMPLICATED WERE THE DISTRICT CHIEFS OF CHAU THANH AND CHO GAO DISTRICTS IN DINH TUONG PROVINCE. (THE LOGISTICS OF THE SMUGGLING OPERATION REPORTEDLY INVOLVED TRANSSHIPMENT FROM MEKONG RIVER SAMPANS TO THE TRUCKS AT A SPOT IN DINH TUONG PROVINCE.) 35 OTHER LOWER RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS WERE ALSO ARRESTED AS WELL AS FOUR POLICE OFFICERS AND ELEVEN CIVILIANS.

3. ACCORDING TO THE INVESTIGATORS AN INTERNATIONAL SMUGGLING RING WAS INVOLVED. THE GOODS ORIGINATED IN HONG KONG OR SINGAPORE AND WERE BROUGHT TO VIETNAMESE WATERS ON A FOREIGN MERCHANT SHIP. UNLOADED OFFSHORE, THEY WERE CARRIED TO THE MEKONG RIVER TRANSFER POINT. THE CHAU THANH DISTRICT CHIEF PRETENDED THAT AN OPERATION WAS UNDERWAY AT THE TRANSFER POINT TO KEEP THE PUBLIC AWAY FROM THE AREA.

4. SIX KEY CIVILIAN OFFENDERS ARE STILL AT LARGE, THE INVESTIGATOR SAID. FOUR OF THESE ARE ETHNIC CHINESE. LARGE REWARDS ARE BEING OFFERED FOR THEIR ARREST OR FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR WHEREABOUTS.

5. PUNITIVE MEASURES TO BE TAKEN INCLUDE DISMISSAL FROM COMMAND AND DOWNGRADING FOR ALL THE MILITARY ACCOMPLICES. THE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN DEFENDANTS WILL BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE MR-3 MILITARY FIELD COURT FOR TRIAL.

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Message Attributes

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